**Answering a visiting school’s questions**

**How the program evolved and took its current shape.**

The program evolved out of 2005 / 2006 Attitudes to School Surveys which identified concerning levels of disengagement and disaffection amongst year 9 students – with the school curriculum, teachers and each other.

A team of teachers came together to investigate how the school might arrest this dip in engagement and create a meaningful, holistic experience for our year 9 students.

The school established a program that uses a pedagogical approach that focuses on inquiry based, experiential models of education, that privilege 21st century educational skills; while seeking to offer an opportunity for students to develop strong relationships with both their peers and teachers.

The program is team taught, with a ratio of 3 teachers to 2 classes of 25 students – this allows the students to work in smaller groups and receive higher levels of support from their teachers.

Students use the term to work towards a series of self-selected learning goals – covering life skills, areas of knowledge and personal qualities. They are able to build on all of these competencies over the course of the program – through class sessions, investigative trails, team based inquiry work, community service and camp.

**How the cohort is divided into smaller groups and how timetable/staffing is established; how the Galileo and the other electives are arranged.**

Each term two new classes [~50 students] join the program. The cohort is broken up in to a range of different groupings:

* Community Service groups – half attend on a Tuesday morning & half on a Thursday afternoon.
* Homegroups – smaller [~16] groups of students who work closely with one of the three staff members. They are supported in their Team Project efforts, their blogging [homework] and pastorally.
* Random splits of ~25 students – students are arranged into a number of randomised splits – enabling staff to separate any challenging relationships and to enable students to work closely with new people.
* Student Choice – when students are able to select their investigative trails or theme specific sessions – either split in half or across three groups.

Staffing:

* There are 3 staff working with 2 classes – this enables the team to work flexibly depending on the curriculum priorities on each given day or coordination requirements.

Electives:

* Students remain in electives – they are part of the broader year 9 cohort every Monday and Thursday morning.

**The curriculum content of the inquiries and the skills workshops**

See attached breakdown of the weekly timetable.

**How the city excursions are managed**

City based excursions tie in with the weekly themes.

If there are three streams running, each staff member is responsible for creating an inquiry based, experiential trail that provides students with the opportunity to explore the week’s theme in the context of life in Melbourne.

There are some excursions that all students participate in:

* Visit to the Melbourne Magistrates Court
* Visit to the Koorie Heritage Trust

Some excursions are student led, these require students to work in groups, independently of the teacher to achieve a clear goal:

* Week 1 – orienteering excursions – scavenger hunt style – to support student confidence moving through Melbourne’s CBD.
* Week 4 – Mini Trail – a component of the term long Team Project. Students arrange to visit one location to gather information about their investigation.
* Week 9 – Options Trail – a day long investigative trail, students pre-arrange appointments with experts in the field they are focusing on, survey people and complete observations in and around the CBD. All students have to check in with staff in the State Library.

**How the community service is managed.**

Community Service is managed by one key staff member who allocates students to their placements. Consideration is given to which primary schools students attended, where they live and interpersonal dynamics.

Relationships with the community service placements are maintained via weekly emails, phone calls and a visit each term.

New community service placement possibilities are explored on an ongoing basis, in acknowledgment of the fact that there are times when placements can no longer accommodate our students.

**The end of term presentations/conferences**

See attached assignment descriptions

**The assessments and how this has worked over recent years**

Students are assessed via a number of methods.

Weekly:

* Reflective Journal
* Response to Critical Questions
* Responding to Blog Partners’ Posts

Term Long:

* Team Project –
  + Mini trail & presentation; action project; options trail; final exhibition

Students are assessed using freely available rubrics. Commentary is made via the blogs – this provides the students and teachers to engage in an ongoing conversation about their experience in the program and their progress.

Mid Term Assessment:

At the start of term, students set numerical goals drawn from the assessment rubric [in line with the rest of the school] related to:

* Attitude & Effort
* Achievement

At mid-term, their homegroup teachers assess the students based on their performance. Students are required to write a personal reflection as to whether they deserve the marks, why, and how they might seek to improve.

End of Term Assessment:

This is student led in its entirety.

Students create a presentation reflecting on their experience of the program – highlights, challenges and whether they achieved their learning goals. Students also provide a numerical assessment of their overall Attitude & Effort and Achievement. They are required to compare their final mark with their original goals and their mid-term report.

Students present their findings to their homegroup teacher and parent / guardian in a 20 minute session.

**The attitude and support of the staff towards the program**

The Galileo staff are extremely invested in the program – each staff member commits to a three year placement. Each staff member manages a specific portfolio of duties in addition to other curriculum development, teaching and marking requirements.

PD and information sessions are offered to the wider collegial community in an effort to increase the likelihood that students will be able to transfer their new skills and insights into the mainstream learning environment.

A close relationship exists with the sub-schools, who manage each cohort’s pastoral and administrative needs.